A Study of Gender, Race and Culture in Selected Biographies and Autobiographies

[Indira Gandhi: A Biography by Pupul Jayakar**, Margaret Thatcher:** Autobiography**,** Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography by **Nelson Mandela,** Rising Star: The Making of **Barack Obama** by David Garrow(Biography**)]**

A synopsis of thesis

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Introduction:

"Writings having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest." This famous definition of literature by the 11th edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary is seemed true when we deeply think about literature. No doubt, it is an artistic and classics expression of human beings. Literature, more or less, is a true and inspiring picture of life. All literatures have the impact of culture mirroring the men, women and their manners. Literature is also an expression of real emotions, ideas, thoughts and passions. It has permanent value and creates interesting guidelines for human beings in every age and country. It definitely accounts for permanence and universality of values in human life. Literature offers thousands of new ideas to the world which have ever been important in human life. Human beings, along with their cultures, manners, societies, are motivated and activated by literature which builds their confidence and teaches them the ways to survive and improve their lives.

Literature does a lot for human beings, society, culture etc. It reflects the author's perceptions about human conditions society, culture at the period in history when the works were written. It is powerful tool to write our identity as humans and make a record of our time period. It has been mirroring of human beings civilization. It portraits the human life, teachers many things, creates culture, society, love among people. Sometimes physical evidence has been destroyed and as long decayed, but their literature survives. Literature is so important because we learn to see through the lenses of others, and sometimes even inanimate objects; therefore it becomes a looking glass into the world as others view it. Actually, it is a journey that is inscribed in pages, and powered by the imagination of the reader. Ultimately, literature has provided a gateway to teach the reader about life experience from the saddest stories to the most joyful ones that will touch their hearts. Today's world is ever-changing. Never before has life been so chaotic and challenging for all. Life before literature was practical and predictable, but in present day, literature has expanded into countless libraries and into the minds of many as the gateway for comprehension and curiosity of the human mind and the world around them. Literature is of great importance and is studied upon as it provides the ability to connect human relationships, and define what is right and what is wrong. Therefore, words are alive more than ever before.

There are many types of literary writings as Poetry, Drama, Fiction, Non-fiction, Novel etc but out all these genres Biography and Autobiography. The reason why young people should read biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries is because they provide the most valuable lessons in life. People who write their autobiographies usually have an interesting story to tell about the trials and tribulations of their own lives. Every life has a beginning, middle, and an end, and how one has lived one's life should be of great interest to those who are still at the beginning.

Literature and politics are two distinctive segments of true social life. It has been noticed that literature has always get influenced by political strategies since political strategies do oscillate the social scenario of life. A close nexus, interrelation between politics and literature strengthens the social life of the contemporary era. The piece of fiction and nonfiction might be realistically said to reflect upon the socio-political climate of the contemporary period. Political policies, dogmas and upheavals do affect the socio-cultural and socio-political domains of life. However, this form of self-expression seems shallow and somewhat limited in its attempt to justify the fictionalization of world politics.

Of course, there are some great personalities in the world who sketch themselves and their societies on the basis of different socio-cultural, socio-political context through their remarkable works. If we glance at the world literature from political perspectives, there are a few writers rendering life with fairness, objectivity. Their writings reflect upon contemporary political scenario, gender politics and gender relations, race and culture. Since it is not possible to talk about all of them, an inevitable choice is made by the researcher to study a few writers' autobiographies in this research. Indira Gandhi's biography by Pupul Jayakar, Margaret Thatcher's autobiography the Path to Power. Also it undertakes Nelson Mandela's autobiography Long Walk to Freedom and Barack Obama's Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama. These personalities are unanimously acknowledged as the leading political figures of their times. In their biographies and autobiographies one can easily find an authentic disclosure of the socio-political issues, gender relations, race struggle and effects of culture.

Objective (S) of Research:

The present study aims to trace out socio-political issues and characteristic development of these great personalities. The study reveals that political figures by virtue of their sensibility have shown great insight and deep understanding in portraying the various significant issues of their times.

The aims and objectives of present research work are-

- To study present autobiographies and biographies with the reflection to national context
- To study present autobiographies and biographies with reflection of varied socio-political ethos
- To study present autobiographies and biographies and trace out their character development.
- To study these autobiographies and biographies to investigate the political issues in society
- To identify influence of political insight in development of these personalities.
- To study these auto/biographies with deconstructive perspective.
- To study these auto/biographies with gender, race and culture point of view
- To investigate various political issues, events that have closely influenced the character development of these personalities.

Hypothesis:

The present study is based on the hypothesis that these auto/biographies of great political icons from various national contexts reveal their concern for deconstruction of the old patterns of socio-political background and monopoly of particular caste, race, and gender and believes in the world of politics. There are great co-relations among these political icons through their political career, decision and national context of socio-cultural and political ethos. The present research also tries to investigate a research problem how these political personalities are structured and emerged themselves by going against the political conventions and political, cultural dogma.

Data, Scope and Limitation(s):

The present study seeks to systematically examine various shades of the narration of these political personalities as a micro representation of a reality which is based on the study of Gender, Race and Culture. The present topic of the study of selected autobiographies and biographies has limitless range of areas for study. However, it is limited to study of selected great personalities and their characteristic development in true life. The present study may lead with its subjective, thematic concern, language point of view, structural perspective, on the way it may take a note of their biographical and autobiographical elements, etc. The study has been limited to the most popular autobiographies and biographies of selected political personalities as the first lady Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi –A Biography by Pupul Jayakar, Autobiography of former Prime Minister of United Kingdom Margaret Thatcher - *The Path of Power*, Autobiography of former President of South Africa Nelson Mandela- *Long Walk to Freedom* and the most powerful man and first Afro-American President of United State of America Barack Obama's *Biography of a Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama*. The present study also has the limitation of availability of books, articles, journals, research papers and information from the standard libraries and open resources.

Research Methodology:

The present study will follow the basic method of literary research as critical analysis for its evaluation of literary and non-literary text. The current research methodology will be used through internationally accepted styles to analysis and interpret the selected texts. The present research intends to work out within the framework of the concepts as Gender, Race, Culture and Deconstruction study. The present study of selected Autobiographies and biographies will analyze the political, social and personal development of these political personalities. The present work would be undertaken through data collection, analysis of the data, interpretation, citation and a bunch of inferences, references, comments and quotes to arrive at a conclusion that would seek to validate the hypothesis.

Although the narration will be approached through the framework mentioned above, the attempt will be to examine how these autobiographies and biographies are inadvertently reflections of the timeless in the form of present, from which the wise may derive lessons for the future.

Justification for Research/ Value of Research:

The in-depth analysis of biographies and autobiographies will undertake for the study that would bring greater significance and contribution to the genre. It would highlight many unspoken areas and would prove as significant contribution to the field of literature. The constructive and deconstructive reading of the development of great personalities, national heroes would be directive in many respect to its reader, knowledge seeker and aspirants. It will open many untouched areas in literature and provides a new dimension to the literature.

Pedagogical Implications:

The present research will definitely helpful to students, researcher, critics and teachers and those who are pursuing their interest and education in the area of literature, deconstructive studies, journalism, social sciences and writing. It will focus on the new genre of literature as the legal form of literature.

Tentative Chapterisation:

The proposed research will have sex chapters

The **first chapter** will be an introduction that will attempt to investigate broadly toward autobiographies and biographies as a new genre of literary study or literature. The researcher will try to examine the questions as what is Autobiography and Biographies. This chapter will include the general discussion on Autobiography and Biographies as the most remarkable genre of literature. Autobiography and Biographies- their rise, development and popularity up to 21th century, emerging issues, topics, types of autobiographies and biographies. Gender, Race, Culture and deconstruction point of views and the purpose of selecting a few political personalities and their autobiographies and biographies for the present focus in this research.

The **second chapter** will seek to showcase of the theory of Gender and its rising, development, applicability, importance etc.

The **third chapter** will introduce the Biography of First lady Prime Minister of India - Indira Gandhi –A Biography by Pupul Jayakar and Autobiography of the former Prime Minister of United Kingdom - Margaret Thatcher - *The Path of Power.*

The **fourth chapter** will study the theory of Race and its developments, applicability, importance etc.

The **fifth chapter** will deal with an Autobiography of former President of South Africa - Nelson Mandela- *Long Walk to Freedom* and first Afro-American President of United State of America - Barack Obama- *Biography Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama.*

The **sixth chapter** would draw implications to form conclusion based on the analysis, interpretation attempted in the previous five chapters. This chapter will deal with the findings on the basis of the study of these selected autobiographies and biographies with gender, race, and culture and deconstruction point of view. It will also include general comments on their political life and career. At the end there will be interpretation, analysis and valuable commentary upon of pro-deconstructive perspectives and human quest for individuality.

Abstract of Research Topic:

Twentieth century saw the new forms of criticism and evolving theories for understanding the making of literature. These theories include Marxism, Feminism, Formalism, and Structuralism and deconstructive theory so on. Autobiography word derived from three Greek words meaning “self,” “life,” and “write.” Autobiography is a style of writing that has been around nearly as long as history has been recorded. Yet autobiography was not classified as a genre within itself until the late eighteenth century. Robert Southey coined the term in 1809 to describe the work of a Portuguese poet (Anderson 1, 7; Berryman 71). In his book, *Inside Out*, E. Stuart Bates offers a functional definition of autobiography as “a narrative of the past of a person by the person concerned”.

The word "autobiography" was first used deprecatingly by William Taylor in 1797 in the English periodical *The Monthly Review*, when he suggested the word as a hybrid, but condemned it as "pedantic". However, its next recorded use was in its present sense, by Robert Southey in 1809. Despite only being named early in the nineteenth century, first-person autobiographical writing originates in antiquity. Roy Pascal differentiates autobiography from the periodic self-reflective mode of journal or diary writing by noting that”. There are such kind of autobiographies and biographies that one has to go through them in their life time period, at least once.

Indira Gandhi: A Biography by Pupul Jayakar When Indira Gandhi was brutally assassinated in 1984, she had lived through India's tortured liberation from the British Empire, the bloody era of partition, and the monumental difficulties associated with sustaining the world's largest and most troubled democratic nation. Now it comes as a unique biography of the accomplished politician. She was the first lady prime minister of India. Her Journey from a common lady to Prime Minister is remarkable if we think with gender and culture and deconstructive point of view.

The Path to Power is a memoir cum autobiography by former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Margaret Thatcher covering her life from her birth in 1925 until she became Prime Minister in 1979. Most of the book covers her life up until her election victory in 1979 but she

added on about 150 pages at the end to give her opinions on current affairs on the years since she resigned as Prime Minister in 1990. Although Thatcher avoided personal attacks on her successor John Major, she clearly believed that he had squandered her legacy and was pursuing un-Thatcherite policies. The book was serialised in the *Sunday Times* where the apparent attacks on the Major government were sensationalised.

Long Walk to Freedom is an autobiographical work written by South African President Nelson Mandela, and first published in 1994 by Little Brown & Co. The book profiles his early life, coming of age, education and 27 years in prison. Under the apartheid government, Mandela was regarded as a terrorist and jailed on the infamous Robben Island for his role as a leader of the then-outlawed ANC. He later achieved international recognition for his leadership as president in rebuilding the country's once segregated society.

Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama captivatingly describes Barack Obama's tumultuous upbringing as a young black man attending an almost-all-white, elite private school in Honolulu while being raised almost exclusively by his white grandparents. After recounting Obama's college years in California and New York, Garrow charts Obama's time as a Chicago community organizer, working in some of the city's roughest neighborhoods; his years at the top of his Harvard Law School class; and his return to Chicago, where Obama honed his skills as a hard-knuckled politician, first in the state legislature and then as a candidate for the United States Senate and then become the first afro-American President of United states of America.

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